

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST CLUB.
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB.

P.O. BOX. 154.

STANTHORPE QLD. 4380.

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	Mr. FRANK WILKINSON.
	Mr. TOM CHAPMAN.
	MRS. IRENE CHAPMAN.

MEETINGS 4th. WEDNESDAY of each month at the C.W.A. ROOMS.
at 8p.m.

OUTINGS. Each SUNDAY PRECEDING the FOURTH WEDNESDAY.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.
SINGLE. \$2.00 FAMILY. \$3.00.

AIMS of the CLUB.

1. To study all branches of natural history.
2. Preservation of the flora and fauna of Queensland.
3. Encouragement of a spirit of protection towards native birds, animals and plants.
4. To assist where possible in scientific research.
5. To publish a monthly newsletter.

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING WEDNESDAY 28th. FEBRUARY 1979.Present 43.Apologies 3.

The President extended a welcome to all members and visitors who were present.

Minutes. It was moved by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Walker that the minutes as per the February Magazine be taken as read..... Carried.

Correspondence.Inward Correspondence.

1. Five Press Statements from National Parks and Wildlife.
2. Austventure Calendar of Trips and brochure.
3. Mr. G. Thies re subscription rates.
4. Magazines 2x Habitat (Dec. and Feb.)
5. N.P.A. Dec Vol. 48 No. 7. Feb. Vol. 49., No. 1.
6. Urimbirra Vol. 13 Nos. 1 and 2. Vol. 12 No. 9.
7. Warwick Walker x 2 Feb. and Vol. 6 No. 3.
8. Darling Downs Vol. 1. Nos. 3 and 4.
9. Down Under Vol. 17 No. 5.
10. Contact Vol. vi. No. 3.

Outward:

40S re outing and programme.

It was moved by Mrs. Mc. Donald and seconded by Mrs. Stevenson that the inward be adopted and the outward be endorsed..... Carried.

Finance.

In the absence of the treasurer, the President read the report which showed a credit of \$119.89. It was moved by Mrs. Marsden that the report be received and the following accounts be passed for payment, Q.C.W.A. rent \$5.00; Magazine postage \$6.60. Seconded by Mrs. Paskin.... Carried.

Outing Report.

Mrs. Marsden reported on the outing to Dillion Hill and Goat Hill in the Glen Aplin District. The nineteen people who attended had a most enjoyable afternoon, especially one member, Doug Binns who found a rare species of gecko Underwoodisaurus sphyrurus. This gecko is confined to northern parts of the Granite Belt.

Next Outing:

Place: Mount Mitchell (Cunningham's);

Leaders: Janet and Colin Hockings

Date: Sunday 25th. March.

Meeting Place: Members are asked to meet at the top of the Gap by 10am. Bring a cut or packed lunch which can be carried to the top of the mountain. A container for water would also be advisable.

Next Meeting:

Date: Wednesday 28th. March.

Guest Speaker: Tom and Dot Archer.

Topic: Travelling around New Zealand.

General Business:

Mrs. Harslett read a letter from Miss Rhonda Scoullar from the Queensland Museum concerning articles of interest which could be published in our monthly magazine, if we wished. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm. The guest speaker Mrs. Harslett presented an excellent slide

General Business Cont:

programme covering a seven week trip in Western Australia from the S.W. corner of W.A. to the far N.W. and Kimberleys.
Janet Hockings.
Hon. Sec.

Some Birds at Dillion Hill.

The highlight of the outing to the Dillion Hill area as regards birds was a period between 12.30 and 1pm., an unusual time to be a "birdos" delight.

by Tom Chapman.

An area of open scrub with a rocky outcrop and a patch of blackberries obviously provided the requirements of an interesting collection of birds. I was first attracted to the area by the typical feeding calls of Speckled Warblers. These busy birds with the black-striped waistcoats are always a favourite of mine and can be very closely approached as they become absorbed in their search for food amongst the undergrowth. One hopped onto a log very close to me and was only interested in devouring the long wire worm he had discovered.

Was it coincidence or did their noisy successful hunting bring the Blue Wren colony, the lone beautifully-yellow Yellow Robin, the pair of Leaden Flycatcher, with typical squeaking call, the chip-chirping group of Yellow Faced Honeyeaters, the White Throated Tree Creeper that so effortlessly ran up over and under trunks and limbs, and the elegantly attired Rufous Whistler?

As I watched with interest this collection of birds industriously foraging on the ground and in the trees a Grey Fantail just as inquisitively watched me, but with no attempt at discreet inconspicuousness. In fact his main desire seemed to be, to see how close, how often or in how many ways he could approach me.

In the distance and gradually getting closer I could hear the characteristic call, their single-noted-presumably-keeping-in-touch call, of the White Winged Choughs. They too seemed to be attracted to the same area and as they moved through with their look-whats-here-call, so different to the first call. They reminded me of our Black Great Dane as they spread all and sundry in all directions with their exuberance. Their very definite alarm call on seeing me left no doubt to all concerned that there was danger about. However the other friendly fossickers soon returned to their interrupted lunch after the Choughs left. In fact all the commotion attracted a green-jacketted, striped-shirted Olive Backed Oriole who alighted just above me and burst into his, 'Its-great to-be-alive' run up and down the scale.

But what were the other two birds fluttering from the branch? With red curved bill, wings various shades of blueish sheen and dark brown head, they looked so familiar but it was quite a while before I recognised them. Being used to their aerial acrobatics

Dillion Hill Bird notes, by Tom Chapman Cont.

on seeing them perched on the extremities of a dead tree I guess I can be excused for not recognising the so-easily-recognisable Dollar Bird. Were they young birds? Probably not, fully coloured, perhaps a couple looking for somewhere to set up house, or just seeing how the other half lived? Whatever the reason I appreciated the opportunity to observe them at such close quarters even if in an unfamiliar role.

While climbing Dillion Hill and Goat Rocks, appreciating the view and orientating ourselves, birding wasn't very successful, but a party of Red Browed Finches created an interesting diversion. Their olive-green bodies, bright red flash from the tails as they flittered from tree to tree and conspicuous red brow made identification easy. There were however several in the group in disguise, as on close examination they lacked the characteristic red brow. Maybe they were immature, but all their other colourings were very pronounced, maybe they were females, but if so they were very much in the minority. Maybe there are always a few non-red-browed Red Browed Finches in the group, but I have not noticed them before.

On returning to our cars the usual cuppa was enjoyed by all and as I listened to the musical calls of a Rufous Whistler, a grey Thrush and a Grey Butcher Bird I recalled how surprised we were at the almost complete lack of bird noises during a recent trip to New Zealand. In practically all areas of both Islands the very obvious lack of birds was the only disappointment of a wonderfully scenic country.

Tom Chapman.

Thank you Tom, for this article with its delightful human interest packed descriptions of the birds seen. I believe these are ^{impressive} memorable descriptions, and that such articles occasionally included do a deal of good and give more pleasure and, to stimulate interest in those new comers to the fascination the past time of bird watching. Your zest and enjoyment in the activity comes through loud and clear to those who have spent many hours and days doing just this, and reminds us all that if we don't make a deliberate effort in the future, for more free time to engage in such delightful observations we are depriving ourselves of a great deal of pleasure.

Sorry Tom, I got so carried away that I left out the last paragraph of your article and I'll have to admit I went outside and looked at a couple of King Parrots acting a little differently !!! To finish Tom's article:

Even more than not seeing birds we missed their calls at various times of the day. Just imagine a day in Australia and the Australian bush with no Kookaburras chuckling, no Rosellas squarking and no joyful Currawong calls echoing over the ranges. For the first few days after returning I even appreciated the monotonous cawing of the crows. With this in mind I listened to the birds "singing" around us and said to myself, "the birds I saw and heard to-day made the outing so much more enjoyable and worthwhile."

Easter Invitation.

President Colin has been asked by President David Hockings of the Queensland Naturalist Club to extend to our members an invitation to join the members of the Queensland Naturalist Club on a "campout" at Easter to the Mount Lindsay area. Preliminary Camp directions are if proceeding from Brisbane direction along the Mount Lindsay Highway, 1(one) km. towards Mount Lindsay on the southern side of Palen Creek Prison Farm turn left on a gravel road. At this point and thence to the camp site, there will be Q.N.C. signs. Date 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th. April. I suggest if anyone is interested they get in touch with Colin Hockings and no doubt he will pass on any nominations.

Bird of the Month.....by Mr. Tom Chapman.....

What better description could we have for the Speckled Warbler than its scientific name of *Chthonicola sagittata*? "Chthon" means earth and "colere" to inhabit, "sagittatus" means marked with arrows and that is exactly what it is, a bird that is marked with arrows and that inhabits the earth.

A large part of their day is spent searching for food in small parties as they hop about on the ground in the open woodlands. Their food consists of insects, insect larvae and seeds. If observed unobtrusively they will approach quite closely being so intent on their feeding, but on being disturbed they fly into low branches while uttering scolding noises. When the cause of their resentment moves away they promptly return to the ground and continue feeding. Speckled Warblers tend to remain in a suitable area for most of the year and generally can be observed at a particular locality at a given time.

Its chief call is a churring chatter but it also has a sweet song with a tendency to mimic. The call most commonly heard however is the scolding chatter when they are disturbed.

The upper part of the body is grey, broadly striped blackish-brown; rump fawn; tail brown-black broadly tipped white. Head brown, finely streaked with white; lores and feathers around eyes white. Eyebrows white and above a fine black band (redish brown in the female) which widens behind the eye. Eyes brown, bill grey-brown, legs blue-grey. Face and underparts cream, breast is distinctively marked with black arrow-like streaks. These black streaks are the most conspicuous and identifying marks and are the source of the species name of "sagittatus".

The nest of the Speckled Warbler is dome shaped and built of dried grass and bark and lined with soft fur and feathers. It is built in a slight depression in the ground, this depression is probably excavated by the birds, themselves.

Bird of the Month Cont.

A side entrance enables the birds to walk into the nest which is carefully hidden in matted low grass, low bushes or debris.

There are three or four eggs reddish, chocolatey-brown with a slight dark zone at the larger end of the egg. The breeding season is from September to January, but also sometimes in the Autumn.

The Speckled Warbler is the chief host species for the Black-eared Cuckoo which lays an egg with similar markings. However, if a damp finger is run over the cuckoo's egg the colour comes off. This just shows what a cheat the cuckoo really is and I hope that his tricks are not too often successful as I have a great liking for the sprightly and sociable little Speckled Warbler.

Tom Chapman

Letter of Appreciation and Request:

Miss Rhonda Scoullar, Education Officer on the staff of the Queensland Museum, wrote expressing interest in and appreciation of our efforts in the Monthly Magazine. We thank her for this and the comments (constructive) re the 'Aims'. We are also pleased to have the suggestions of some material which might be quite pertinent to the interests of our members, (and the examples included) in the communication.

Miss Scoullar also says, "Finally, I have recently been co-opted into the germinating Environmental Education sub-committee of the Australian Littoral Society. Although in the past this organization has concentrated largely on marine life, we feel it would be advantageous to the society and useful to the community to extend this to all aquatic and near aquatic habitats. We have chosen as a theme "By the Waters Edge" and we are contemplating running a competition through our schools for submissions of any kind (creative, photographic, scientific.) on this topic. We hope to gain support of the I.Y.C. Environmental issues committee, but I also feel that groups such as local naturalists could assist to enlarge the interest and encourage more country participation. At this stage I would like to know if you are interested and if you have any suggestions to improve the idea". End of quote from the letter and over to you the members if you wish to make any comments. Miss Rhonda Scoullar, having grown up in the district will be known to a number of the members, and thus they will be interested in the work being done.

Yours in Nats.

Jean.